

APOCALYPTIC THEME IN SEVENEVES BY NEAL STEPHENSON

P. PANDIA RAJAMMAL¹ & KARTHIGA. K²

¹Assistant Professor, Department of English, Kalasalingam Academy of Research and Education,
Krishnankoil, Tamil Nadu, India

²M.Phil, Department of English, Kalasalingam Academy of Research and Education,
Krishnankoil, Tamil Nadu, India

ABSTRACT

SEVENEVES is a novel by Neal Stephenson which deals with the apocalyptic situation. It is an extraordinary science fiction that urges everyone to read the novel. The novel clearly forecast the events to be happen after two years at the time, when the moon split into seven pieces. Neal Stephenson in this book warned every people around the country that they should aware about the earth and the drastic change that is acquiring in the celestial body every day. This hard science fiction which deals with the present event and moves to 5000 years after the formation of new human races. Stephenson introduced many scientific terms in this novel. This book alienated into three parts from the hard rain the formation of the human race. Neal Stephenson presents this novel in a futuristic mind. This paper describes about the traumatic fragmentation and reunion of humanity.

KEYWORDS: Hard Rain, Cloud Ark, Apocalyptic, Moon Shatter & Seven Races

Received: Feb 08, 2019; **Accepted:** Feb 28, 2019; **Published:** Mar 12, 2019; **Paper Id.:** IJELAPR20199

INTRODUCTION

This novel opens with a line that “The moon blew up without warning and for no apparent Reason”.(Stephenson, 2016) This line indicates that some catastrophic event is in flux to take consign in the world. The first line of the book is a hypothesis statement, which explains the whole proposal of the tome. The moon shatters into seven pieces. A hefty number of moon fragments will begin to enter into the earth’s ambience, forming a “white sky”. After two years “hard rain” will hit the shell of the earth. This hard rain will amplify the atmospheric pressure and the heat. Then the heat will absorb the water from the ocean. Then the sea level will diminish. These are the upheaval by the hard rain. The novel is alienated into three parts. The first part describes the confrontation of moon splinter and the forthcoming disaster of hard rain. Then the second part is concerning edifice of the cloud ark by the scientist from diverse parts of the world. The cloud ark which is called as hanging world looks like a bright bead strung on a silver chain. Then the third part explains about the hard rain and its effects along with the formation of new origin and species after five thousand years. Neal Stephenson’s imaginative ideas make the novel a great success. This novel is an ‘Apocalyptic Fiction’ which means John J. Collins in his book, *The Apocalyptic Imagination* he says

Apocalypse is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world. (Collins, 1992)

Apocalyptic is a literary genre of strong hard science fiction. Apocalyptic theme is implied in this novel. In the article, ‘Ohio River- New World Encyclopedia’ the origin of apocalyptic literature is defined as

Apocalyptic literature is a genre of prophetic writing. At first it was developed in the Jewish culture and then only popular among the Christians. The term “Apocalypse” is from the Greek word for “Revelation”. The apocalyptic literature of Judaism and Christianity embraces a considerable period, from the centuries following the exile in Babylon down to the close of the middle ages. The best known literature of this type was created in Judaism from 200.B.C.E to 100. C.E., and in Christianity from 50 to approximately 350 C.E much apocalyptic literature was produced in this period, but only a small portion of it was included in either the Hebrew Bible or the New Testament.(Apocalyptic Literature, 2019)

The Perspective of the Apocalyptic is also explained in the article “Ohio River- New World Encyclopedia”.

An apocalypse is a literary report of an amazing, often fearful, violent vision that reveals truths about past, present, and then future times in highly symbolic and poetical terms. The writer may represent himself as being transported into a heavenly realm or the vision may be unveiled and even interpreted by angelic messages. Apocalyptic exhortation are aimed at chastening and reforming their hearers with promise of rewards and punishment in the coming “end times”.(Apocalyptic Literature, 2019)

William Butler Yeats’s poem The Second Coming (1919) has in it the implementation of apocalyptic themes. This poem reveals the horror vision of the destruction of the world in these words:

Turning and turning in the widening gyre

The falcon cannot hear the falconer;

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;

Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world...

Surely some revelation is at hand.

Surely the second coming is at hand.

The Second Coming!(Yeats, 1919)

The opening lines of the poem specify the disintegration which has overtaken the Christian civilization. Confusion is spreading all over the world. Then the word ‘things fall apart’ denotes that a catastrophic event is going to happen in the world. The poem ends with a message that some new revelation or new “coming” is near. Then scientist from diverse countries decided to build a ‘cloud ark’ around the International Space Station. The international space station is supported by Amalthea, an asteroid which protects the space station from the hard rain. Cloud Ark is an attempt to defend the human race from the destroying earth. Each nation on earth is invited to choose a miniature number of young people to be a constituent in the cloud ark. Ivy Xiao commander of the International Space Station (ISS) incomplete Already the ISS is attached with the Arjuna Asteroid called Amalthea. Scientists commence their work by building the cloud ark. Robots are worn to excavate Amalthea to provide more defence for running a project of Dinah. Many Technicians, scientists, specialists are sent to the cloud ark. The cloud ark must be able to accommodate people self-sufficiently for 5000 years and it is also capable of repopulating the earth’s vigour. Many human genetic archives are sent to the cloud ark for

rebuilding the human population. The scientists launched 1500 people in the cloud ark before the hard rain hits the surface of the earth. In this circumstance, Sean Probst realizes that the cloud ark will require a water supply to guide their life. He made two years expedition to extort ice from a comet nicknamed Greg's skeleton, by using a nuclear reactor.

Then the hard rain begins roughly two years after the devastation of the moon. Every human being on the earth has been smashed. But, many of them try to take shelter under the Ocean. Markus Leuker appointed as a leader of the cloud ark, he declared many laws for the people in the cloud ark. He laid many rule that the members of the government will not to be launched into the space. Even though as a president of America, Julia Bliss Flaherty managed and entered herself into the space. Steven Poole in his Article "Seveneves by Neal Stephenson- a truly epic disaster novel" explains the character of Markus Leuker "The choice was explained in terms of Markus's dynamic leadership style, his charisma, and other such buzzwords, that as everyone understood, boiled down to the fact that he was a man".(Poole, 2015)

Then the second part comes to serious situation that the debris from the moon starts to reach the surface of the earth. The ISS and the comet Amalthea could not manage the debris from the moon and they in full swing to destroy. Most of the parts have been destroyed the physical human genetic archive which is attached to the ISS is ruined by thrusters of an arklet fleeting closely. So, the scientist determined to decentralise the swarm of small space into a vessel at a higher orbit and to act the cloud ark as the central clout for the ISS. Then the scientist Dubois wants to save himself in the "cleft", which means an exposed iron core from the moon. Group of people some supports Flaherty and some in the team of the scientist. As every- one got fear that they cannot get help from others. As many of them died due to the skin disease which is caused by the radiation produced by the moon. Then many of them died of oxygen suffocation and due to starvation. Then at last only eleven women survived. They were Lusia, Dinah, Ivy, Aida, Tekla, Camila, Molia and Julia. Among these women Lusia reached menopause. All the human genetic archive has been destroyed, only few resources like genetic laboratory helped to regenerate human sources through parthenogenesis. Through this process every offspring will be genetically modified, enhanced and spotted into every woman's womb and they have been called as new human races after the destruction of the earth. This new races are called as seven races in that origin. From these seven races itself the author named this book as *Seveneves*.

Then the third part of the novel starts after 5000 years. These seven races from the women have been considered as seven ruling races. They have the ability to change their body condition according to their climatic changes and the circumstances that happening in their place was called as epigraphic shift. The iron core from the moon has been used by the space habitants. Then the cleft changed its nature into a cradle and then many scientific archives used to melt the ice from the comets and artificial oceans are produced. Then another idea of replanting the trees by producing a DNA will enhance the growth of the plants. A "Seven" group of seven people with one member for each race is recruited by "Doc" Hu Noah nominated to investigate mysterious people on the Earth. They discover some human survived during the Hard Rain. Then the people on the Planet living in deep mines ("Diggers"), while others survived under the Oceans using submarines ("Pingeers") although these two additional races are included into the Cloud Ark. The Diggers descendants of Dinah's family and the Pingeers are called as Blue Family. These nine races are the human beings, existed in the Cloud Ark and helped each other to form a new world. This novel ended in this way by defining new to world to that race. In the article, "Goodreads" a review about the novel *Seveneves*,

A catastrophic event renders the earth a ticking time bomb. In a feverish race against the inevitable, nations around the globe band together to devise an ambitious plan to ensure the survival of humanity far beyond our

atmosphere, in outer space. But the complexities and unpredictability of human nature coupled with unforeseen challenges and dangers threaten the intrepid pioneers, until only a handful of survivors remain. (*Seveneves* by Neal Stephenson, 2015)

Neal Stephenson presents unpredictable events in this novel. Each event, each decision and the catastrophe faced by the people are filled with suspense and excitement. Stephenson gives a hope and cling a bell to the people that the incident like a moon blast may be happen in the upcoming years. He foretells and executes an idea that everyone wants to notice changes and they should ready to visage the circumstances.

REFERENCES

1. *Apocalyptic Literature*. (2019, January 29). Retrieved Febraury 8, 2019, from Ohio River - New World Encyclopaedia: http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Apocalyptic_literature
2. Collins, J. J. (1992). *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to the Jewish Matrix of Christianity*. New York: Crossroad.
3. Poole, S. (2015, May 13). *Seveneves* by Neal Stephenson a truly Epic Disaster Novel. Retrieved January 2019, 2, from The Guardian: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/may/13/seveneves-by-neal-stephenson-disaster-novel>
4. Akabogu, J. U. *Traditional IGBO Society in World Literature Themes: A Study of the Portrayal of the Interaction between Water Spirits and the Human Society in Elechi Amadi's Novel "The Concubine"*(1966).
5. *Seveneves* by Neal Stephenson. (2015, May 19). Retrieved January 2, 2019, from Goodreads: <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/22816087-seveneves>
6. Stephenson, N. (2016). *Seveneves*. London: The Borough Press.
7. Yeats, W. (1919). *The Second Coming*. Dublin: Caula Press.